



George
Heriot's
School
Founded 1628

Standards and Quality Report 2024–25

This Standards and Quality Report 2024–25 outlines the key focus areas of improvement across the Junior and Senior Schools, including their respective developments in curriculum, attainment, and achievement. This report also highlights key aspects of school life including the academic and co-curricular achievements and reports on the outcomes of research behind the School’s Strategic Plan.

George Heriot’s School: Heritage, Ethos and Values

George Heriot’s Trust was established in 1624 under the Will of George Heriot, jeweller and goldsmith to King James VI and I.

The Foundation, Ethos, and Values are at the centre of everything we do and make George Heriot’s School what it is today, guiding our daily activities and shaping our vision for the future. The School’s educational philosophy and values have been embedded into the design of our future School Strategy.

George Heriot’s School Values are *Work Hard, Be Kind, Be Yourself*.

Strategic Development

The outcomes from the School’s Research and Enquiry groups, wider consultation with stakeholders, and self-evaluation practices, culminated in the creation of Heriot’s Strategic Plan 2025 – 2030. The strategy has prioritised the key educational and business objectives for the next 5+ years and has incorporated specific targets, for example, within Sport, STEM+ and Sustainability, as well as more future focussed objectives on creativity and employability. The accumulation of data, analysis and recommendations made by the Enquiry groups has been complimented by the input

of different community members including Governors, Parent and Pupil groups.

Pilot schemes trialled in the Junior School on Inquiry Based Learning, Metaskills and Digital passports, have been identified as key themes within the School Strategy. These will now extend into the Senior School under the headings of Pupil Agency, Digital Literacy and Skills. Importantly the Strategy details clear objectives on our curriculum design. There is a particular focus on being ‘One School’, building a progressive educational experience from Nursery to Senior 6.

Whole School: Academic overview

Session 2024-25 saw the completion of many aspects of the Whole School Improvement Plan (WSIP) 2022-2025+.

Specific targets completed include the standardisation of Self-evaluation practices. The Academic Leadership Team conducted a broad assessment across all Quality Indicators (QI) and those requiring greater attention e.g. QI 3.3 – Increasing Creativity and Employability – have been given greater prominence in our future strategy.

Established projects, such as the development of Equality and Diversity have been completed. Now

embedded in our curriculum, they continue to be refined and updated for currency and relevance.

The Sustainability drive continues to focus across our Curriculum and Campus and the appointment of a Whole School Coordinator for Session 2025/6 will now provide more focused resource to draw down targets from the Sustainability Strategy column that will be actioned by staff, pupil and community groups.

The School's Campus Plan has been completed with the identification of 5 significant Estate projects of which 2 have progressed to detailed plans. These projects compliment the smaller scale enhancements of Learning and Teaching spaces (e.g. the Junior School STEM+ room) and ongoing repair and renovations across our buildings.

Whole School Wellbeing

The Wellbeing Steering Group has continued to review and implement the three-year improvement plan.

One of the most successful initiatives has been the 'Winter Wellbeing' campaign, focussing on education about mental health during the challenging winter months. Events for both pupils and staff have been created that bring the community together and foster a positive mindset.

As a whole school community, we have also participated in World Mental Health Day and World Socks Day raising awareness of Downs Syndrome, as well as the Big Walk and Wheel Initiative, encouraging staff and pupils to make active journeys to school. We created a centralised plan for the school grounds, focussing on how our campus can promote wellbeing.

Sustainability

The School was delighted to successfully reapply for the Eco Schools Scotland Green Flag Award in 2025, which focused on the topics of Climate Action, School Grounds and Health and Wellbeing. It highlighted the benefits of our partnerships with Edinburgh Remakery and ReusingIT to donate IT equipment for community benefit and save more than 34,105 kg (CO₂e).

We participated in Keep Scotland Beautiful's Spring Clean and Earth Day. Pupils and staff logged 6,475

active travel journeys during Sustrans' Big Walk and Wheel two-week event, 52% more than last year, finishing 10th in our category across the UK and 2nd in Scotland. Four S6 pupils successfully completed the WWF Sustainable Futures course, which included inspiring talks about regenerative economics and geopolitics. Senior School pupils introduced a termly newsletter for EARTH and environmental sustainability news, which is shared with pupils and staff.

We are working towards embedding our Sustainability Mission Statement within our culture, community, curriculum and campus. This is actioned through our Sustainability Improvement Plan that enables greater pupil and staff agency. Examples of projects have included the installation of House planters funded by the Parents' Association and tree-planting for the Borders Forest Trust.



Junior School

School Improvement

The Junior School saw a great deal of improvement during the 2024-25 session.

The self-evaluation cycle that focusses and guides school improvement was further embedded through the practices of staff and complimented the community feedback from the review carried out by RS Academics. Improvement projects included work on developing the transfer and use of information with regards to attainment and achievement data. The whole school statement for Equality, Equity and Diversity was embedded and introduced to new Staff via the induction programme. As part of our progression of Digital Literacy, we achieved the Digital Schools Award.

In terms of pupil wellbeing, we established and developed two nurture spaces, offering quiet and calm space for the benefit of pupils struggling with neurodiversity and related social anxiety. The building work in the Nursery opened access to the outdoors and enhanced the indoor/outdoor play provision. The introduction of 'nature nursery' days at Goldenacre has been successful and plans are in place for these to continue. In Primary 1, research on play pedagogy continued with structured play opportunities included to enhance transition.

Curriculum

Session 2024-25 saw classes using the new JS STEM+ room. This new facility promotes pupil agency as pupils are free to self-select resources and problem solve design questions. A dedicated space enables classes to spend longer on practical projects, such as robotics.

Junior School teachers continue to promote pupil agency through adopting an inquiry-based Learning approach. All classes have a least one inquiry-based Learning topic. The development of teaching explicit skills progresses through the implementation of the 5 Cs (creative, caring, critical, collaborative and curious thinkers).

We continue to maintain high academic standards with a focus on Numeracy and Maths, exploring and applying mathematical concepts to understand and solve problems.

Attainment and Achievement

Heriot's pupils enjoyed great success in the BEBRAS computing challenge, with ten pupils receiving gold awards, fifteen achieving distinction and eighteen merit. We took part in the annual Scottish Primary Maths Challenge, in which one pupil achieved a gold award, eight won silver and thirteen bronze.

It has been a busy year of Drama, with the wonderful Nativity productions, *Miracle in Town* (P1 and P2) and *We're Going on a Stable Hunt* (Nursery). The annual productions of *The Bee Musical* (P3) and *Viking Voyage* reflected the awareness the children have developed in their topic studies. An outstanding Junior School Show was staged, *Frozen*. No less than 112 pupils were involved in this deeply impressive and hugely entertaining production.

On the sports field, we continue to have an enormous number of boys and girls playing hockey. Our cross-country team achieved unprecedented success in the Edinburgh Schools' Cross Country Leagues. The P7 Girls' team won silver, the P5/6 Girls' team won bronze and the P5/6 Boys' won an excellent team gold.

The average number of clubs taken has exceeded 3 per pupil for the first time.

The Music Festival was given greater prominence, the evening concert taking on a whole new more professional level in the Greyfriars Kirk. This excellent musical occasion capped off two days of group and individual activity and performance. More pupils than ever, an amazing 430, participated in the annual concert at the Usher Hall.



Senior School

School Improvement

The Senior School Improvement Plan (SSIP) focused on the three themes of Curriculum, Digital Learning and Wellbeing and continued into its second year of implementation in 2024-2025.

Wellbeing

With the Pastoral Restructure, one of the benefits was the opportunity for Houses to develop a stronger sense of identity, with all that that might bring - in terms of enhanced House competition and House social events.

Curriculum

This year also saw the Head of Senior School and SSLT colleagues planning ahead to meet the challenge of our new strategic goal of enhancing pupil agency. The immediate tangible benefit for pupils will be the initial rollout of Project-based Learning in the Senior School. The first phase of this initiative sees the introduction of the AQA Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) for a trial cohort of S6 pupils, in August 2025.

Attainment and Achievement

Academic Results

The commitment shown by staff and the consistent efforts of pupils meant that the SQA results achieved by pupils were excellent - particularly at NAT5, where the cohort achieved Heriot's best-ever results.

SQA results 2025

- At National 5 level, S4 pupils achieved 98.8% pass rate (A-C) with 88.8% passes at A grade – the highest percentages attained in recent years and with 118 pupils (65.2% of the year cohort) getting straight As.
- At Higher level, S5 pupils gained 97.0% passes (A-C) with 75.6% at A grade, a superb statistic. 95 pupils (53% of the year cohort) achieved straight A grades in all their Higher exams, an outstanding achievement.

- Finally, and maintaining these high standards, was the S6 cohort, who achieved 91.7% (A-C) at Advanced Higher Level (with 60.6% at A grade).

Expressive Arts

The 2024-2025 Session saw the expressive arts flourishing at Heriot's.

- One pupil's work was selected to be shown at the RA Summer Show in London
- Two pupils were shortlisted for the prestigious Young Emerging Commercial Artist Competition
- Heriot's pupils also continued to excel in the Junk Kouture Competition, with one group advancing to the London Final, and last year's winner, now in S6, competing at this year's World Final, in Dublin.

In Drama, the Heriot's community was again treated to two major productions:

Cutting a Rug (Term 1)

Treasure Island (Term 3)

Multiple casting meant that a large number of pupils were able to gain experience on stage over the course of performance – with many more involved backstage and with audio-visuals.

In Music, the three annual Senior School concerts (Usher Hall, St Cuthbert's, and Queen's Hall) were again augmented by a series of Chamber Choir events, including an outing as part of the 'St Giles' at Six' programme.

The Pipe Band was invited back to perform at the 2025 August Lorient Festival Interceltique, in Brittany. The Band also enjoyed a first tour of New York, where they participated in the Tartan Day Parade.



CCF

This year, our RAF Section was named Regional Champions for the sixth consecutive year. The Army Section also enjoyed success in competition, winning best School in the whole of Scotland 51 Brigade Army Cadet Drill Competition in October.

Sport

Senior School sport continued to flourish with the sheer breadth of sporting participation and achievement across the Senior School evidenced by another impressive haul of regional and national titles:

- Scottish Schools' Badminton Union Edinburgh Shield
- Edinburgh Schools' Cross Country Senior Boys' Trophy Winner
- Scottish Schools' Fencing Junior Foil Champion
- 7 individual Golds in the Edinburgh Schools Swimming Championships
- National Indoor Hockey Champions
- Rugby National Bowl U16 Runners Up
- Boys' Hockey Goldenacre 7s Champions
- Junior Sculling Head Rowing – Silver
- Junior Inter-Regional Rowing Regatta – Gold
- J16 British Women's Quadruple Sculls Champions

External Engagement



Heriot's remains committed to fostering and sustaining meaningful partnerships with local organisations and schools.

We have continued to regenerate the well-regarded S6 Voluntary Service Programme that has long-established links with a number of external partners and providers, such as the Circle Project. A parallel VLA (Volunteer Language Ambassador) programme sees pupils acting as advocates for modern languages, with Senior School pupils going into local state primary schools to act as Language Assistants in support of young learners.

The 2024-2025 Session saw the inaugural Senior School Charities Fair. This event involved all Senior School staff and pupils in a wide range of activities. The total money raised was £4,690.

Bereavement Conference – June 2025

This free conference organised and run by Heriot's was designed specifically for teachers, across both State and Independent Schools seeking to better support pupils coping with loss and grief.

Contact

For more information about
George Heriot's School, please contact:

George Heriot's School
Lauriston Place
Edinburgh EH3 9EQ

Telephone 0131 229 7263

Email enquiries@george-heriots.com



George
Heriot's
School
Founded 1628

george-heriots.com

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